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SUBJECT: SOUTH SULAWESI: BULUKUMBA'S SYARIAH LAW A "CRASH PROGRAM IN RELIGION"

REF: SURABAYA 39, SURABAYA 72, SURABAYA 74

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¶11. (SBU) Summary: On November 6, Pol/Econ Officer and Pol/Econ Assistant traveled to Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi to discuss the practical implementation of Syariah law in the regency. Located on the southern most tip of South Sulawesi, Bulukumba has implemented local regulations that mirror Syariah Islam. Proponents insist that the regulations are necessary to promote morality and do not apply to the regency's minuscule non-Muslim population. NGOs familiar with the Regent and local regulations based on Syariah Islam tell us that they are misapplied and fundamentally illegal according to Indonesian Law. End Summary.

¶12. (U) A mosque-shaped facade greeted ConGen Surabaya officers entering Bulukumba Regency, the South Sulawesi Kabupaten which has begun issuing and enforcing Syariah law despite opposition from NGOs and others. A sign in the middle of the two-storey structure proclaims, under the English-language heading "Crash Course," a list of local regulations grounded in Syariah Islam. They are: 1) Prohibition, oversight, and control over the sale of alcoholic beverages; 2) Management of zakat (tithes) paid by the professions and the giving of alms to the poor; 3) Muslim clothing for men and women; 4) Proficiency in reading the Qur'an for all prospective marriage partners.

¶13. (SBU) The Regent explained that the regulations simply enshrine already strongly-held religious beliefs. When we asked about implementation and enforcement, the Regent said the regulations were not being actively enforced. He noted that prospective marriage partners, for example, are not prevented from marrying if they cannot recite the Qur'an. They are simply given assistance in learning it. The Regent added that the regulations do not apply to the 2% of the regency's non-Muslims.

Local Moral Crisis Prompted Regulations

¶14. (SBU) Mr. Saipuddin, chairman of the Crescent Star Party (PBB), spoke with us at his home in Bulukumba regarding Syariah law. Echoing the regent, he noted that the local regulations apply to Muslims alone and in any case are neither compulsory nor binding -- it is only a form of moral guidance. There are no legal sanctions if someone is found in violation. He explained

that the genesis of local regulations based on Syariah law actually started in 2000. At that time there were many cafes at a beach near his house that employed girls from outside Bulukumba. After receiving many complaints and reports about family disputes from housewives who were abandoned by their husbands because of the existence of these cafes, the local government closed and moved them to the tourist area at Bira beach some 42 km east of Bulukumba Regency's capital. The local government then issued regulations based on Syariah and, Saipuddin concluded, the situation is now back to normal. Currently, the government only allows cafes to sell liquor to foreign tourists.

On the Other Hand

¶ 15. (SBU) Syamsurijal Ad'han of Association of Advocacy for Education for Children of the People or (LAPAR, Lembaga Advokasi dan Pendidikan Anak Rakyat), painted a different picture of the implementation of Syariah in Bulukumba during a November 5 meeting. Ad'han told us that these Syariah regulations are not simply suggestions. He said that LAPAR "takes risks opposing Syariah law. For example, when we held a seminar to discuss Syariah law in Bulukumba in 2006; a gang of people from The Youth Upholders of Islamic Syariah (Pemuda Penegak Syariah Islam) forced their way into the meeting and broke up the gathering." The group later drove LAPAR out of Bulukumba altogether. Ad'an mentioned that in one village in Bulukumba regency there is a notice board prohibiting provision of public services to people not dressed in Muslim clothing. Although we did not see these particular signs during our visit the following day, we did see signs in Bulukumba that described the Syariah-based local regulations (Perda) in force in the Regency.

¶ 16. (SBU) According to a report in HalaQah, a magazine published by LAPAR the headman in the village of Padang, Bulukumba, issued a "whipping law" to punish a man accused of having an affair with his cousin. The man was apparently accused of immoral activity because of letters he wrote advising his cousin not to

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argue with her husband. He was accused of having an affair with the woman and given the option of being whipped or submitting to unspecified "police action". The man chose neither option and was driven out of the village, but was whipped anyway at the urging of the headman.

Syariah Islam as an Election Tool

¶ 17. (SBU) Ad'han also highlighted early attempts to use Syariah as a tool during the recent gubernatorial elections (Surabaya 39). Recent election results suggest that demands for the implementation of Syariah law throughout the province are limited, however. (Surabaya 72). Third-place gubernatorial candidate, Azis Kahar Muzakar, was a champion of Syariah Islam while chairman of the "The Preparatory Committee for the Application of Islamic Laws" (KPPSI or Komite Persiapan Penegakan Syariah Islam). Similarly, defeated incumbent Amin Syam's running mate, Prof. Mansyur Ramly, was a founder of KPPSI. Although Muzakar did not publicly emphasize Syairat Islam in the campaign, it could be argued that few, if any voters, were unclear on his desire to implement Syariah laws throughout the province if elected. Instead, he used "good governance" as his campaign theme. While Muzakar's third place finish puts a question mark over the usefulness of Syariah Islam as a touchstone for all Sulawesi voters, with nearly 20 percent of votes cast for Muzakar in the most recent election, Syariah regulations appear to have a core constituency.

MCCLELLAND